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08 November 2018

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 1078-18**

Thank you for your email of 7<sup>th</sup> October 2018 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*The FCO Services Annual Report & Accounts 2011/12 page 27, refers to Sickness Absence. It states:*

**The average number of working days lost per employee due to sickness absence was 5.4 in 2011 / 12. We have continued to make improvements in managing stress related and long-term absences.**

*Regarding these cited improvements, I would like this Freedom of Information request to identify between 2011 - 2015 what these improvements were and how were they identified? Presumably case work flagged up the short-comings? I would like to see documentation such as FCO Services Board minutes and also minutes of HR meetings, along with information from the Top Risk Register (TRR). Relevant excerpts will suffice.*

*I would like examples where sickness or long-term illness was seen as not being adequately supported, especially in relation to mental illness and protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, such as depression. Did officers on long-term sick leave have access to a dedicated Welfare Officer and Diversity Advisor, for example, or was this a job share? Were the Welfare Officer and Diversity Advisor roles incorporated with other job roles where conflict of interest might arise? For example, was an HR officer ever tasked to undertake the welfare or diversity role? This would be an obvious conflict of interest. If so, is the conflict of interest highlighted in FCO Services Board meetings? Did the FCO Services Board meetings have a HR representative, and if so, was the HR officer of sufficient grade that he / she had sufficient power of authority to make the changes identified? When depression was flagged up by medical certificates, what was the policy used to track how it changed with time, and who was responsible for noting whether officers with depression came under the Equality Act 2010?*

*I would like copies of all the case studies showing the improvements made; and all possible improvements noted, and whether or not the identified problem was tackled by change in policy and /or procedures. Also how improvements were incorporated: were they incorporated immediately or was there a lag? Were there financial constraints limiting what changes could be accommodated for example?*

*I would like to see how FCO Services were proactively managing stress and the metrics used to identify it. What exactly were the inadequate areas identified in the Annual Report 2011 / 12 and how were the problems addressed?*

*Please state how costs were factored into the decisions making process when implementing (or not,*

*as the case may be) and making the stated improvements.*

*If you need any clarity on this FOI request please don't hesitate to contact me.*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested. FCO Services does hold information relevant to your request.

Improvements made in managing stress-related and long-term absences up to 2017-18:

- Improving resilience workshops for managers and staff;
- Wellbeing screenings where staff ask for general advice on diet and leading a healthy lifestyle;
- Promotion of Time to Talk day since 2015 with regards to tackling the stigma of mental health issues;
- Development of health surveillance training for managers and staff;
- Robust management of absence and, in particular, a focus on stress-related and long-term absences;
- Staff engagement and leadership – launch of the 'One Team, Inspiring Leadership' programme, aimed at developing senior leaders. FCO Services want leaders to build a better place to work;
- Introduction of a Dignity at Work policy;
- Occupational Health Assessments for staff returning after long term sick absence. Phone and face-to-face access available.

Officers have access to welfare support through our Employee Assistance programme, which is confidential and provided by an independent organisation. During the timeline referenced in your FOI request we also employed officers in the HR team who provided support on health and welfare cases. They did not advise on employee relations cases.

During the time period requested, FCO Services had two roles focussed specifically on diversity and handling reasonable adjustments.

The HR Director attends the FCO Services Executive Board.

#### Evidence of discussion of this subject at board meetings

An excerpt from the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013 FCO Services Board minutes:

'The Board discussed the level of sickness absence which, whilst below the Civil Service average, was recognised as high.'

FCO Services does not have any case studies relevant to your request.

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Yours sincerely,

FOI Officer

FCO Services



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